



# News Release

**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**

Detroit District

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## "A Public Service Message from the US Army Corps of Engineers."

**'NOT DESIGNED FOR PUBLIC ACCESS. PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK.'**

Is a familiar sign posted near local piers, asking the public to stay off.

The US Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District's first concern is the safety and well-being of the public, so it strongly urges people to use common sense and caution when it comes to the breakwaters, piers, or jetties in the Great Lakes. If you do decide to go out onto the piers, at least watch weather conditions, wave action, and do not swim near or jump off the piers and breakwaters. "The life you save may be your own."

However, some people continue to walk on, jump off, and swim near the piers without realizing the possibly fatal risks involved.

### **It's beautiful, but dangerous.**

Fishermen, swimmers, nature lovers, and site-seers all love the beauty and thrill of getting on the piers. However, the piers were designed to help ships navigate safely, not for people to walk, sit, swim, or jump from them. People should just stay off these jetties, because they pose various dangers -- surfaces get slick when wet, the edges are sharp, and the underwater surroundings can be brutal, according to the Corps.

### **Everyone else is doing it.**

Sure, but in reality, they are just lucky; the rocks don't care how much skill and knowledge someone has and eventually luck runs out. In Grand Haven for example, a young man - doing what he'd done several times before - broke his neck while jumping off the pier and into the surf, according to the district's Grand Haven Area Office. Many people venturing out on the piers have been swept off, and lost their lives because of the merciless pounding their bodies and heads take upon the rocks.

Just this past weekend a young man familiar with the area is presumed lost to the waters of Lake Michigan after venturing out on the Grand Haven pier. ([see news reports](#))

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District civil works program encompasses 93,000 square miles area of the lower Great Lakes basin in Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Ohio. The Corps operates and/or maintains 104 navigation structures in the basin. Its mission includes real estate transactions, flood control, regulatory activities, disaster response, and mobilization readiness.

**Designed for protection.**

While the Corps of Engineers has tried to make the piers aesthetically pleasing, jetties on the Great Lakes are designed to assist large ships entering the harbor, especially in rough weather. According to the Corps, the piers and breakwaters are designed to reduce the wave action in the channel. That means they have to be able to stand up to 50 years or more against literally tons of pounding waves, several feet of ice piled on and around it, and even an occasional ship crashing into it. The pleasing design lines hide their robust nature. In fact, just like an iceberg, most of the pier is below the water, unseen beneath the murky waves. And, just like an iceberg, the pleasing view up top disguises the danger below.

**Dangers beneath.**

"The armor stone used to support the steel and concrete is large, very hard, and often a few feet beneath the surface of the water usually hidden by foamy, cloudy waves. The danger is present whether the water is high or low, but current low waters make the situation more dangerous. These rocks - each individually weighing between one and forty tons - jut out from the structure beyond the ability of someone to jump past them. On a hot day, it is very tempting to jump or dive off the piers, but then you run the risk of hitting those rocks, getting wedged in between them below the surface, or having the waves throw them violently against the rocks.

For more information ask for the free "Look out!" brochure and/or video at the Corps of Engineer's area offices in Grand Haven, Dave Foster at 616-842-5510, or call Lynn Duerod, at the district headquarters Public Affairs Office in Detroit, at 313-226-4680. Also, visit the Detroit District's homepage at <http://www.lre.usace.army.mil>.

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## Corps of Engineers **Safety Precautions—**

- Closely supervise your children
- Life jackets should be worn when on the pier
- Do not dive off or swim around pier structures
- Stay off piers during high winds or when waves are washing over
- Avoid walking upon wet slippery areas
- Stay away from the edge
- Do not run or climb upon pier structures

Note: Local ordinances may prohibit swimming in navigational channels

\*\*\*\* We encourage you to get the free "Look-Out" video, which can be reproduced and passed along to your friends and loved ones.

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